

education watch:

an update on inclusive education

Volume 4, Issue 3 – Spring 2013

A Silver Bullet? Will the *Moore vs. B.C.* Case Assure Inclusion?

Gordon L. Porter, C.M., *Director of Inclusive Education Canada*

The Supreme Court of Canada's November 9 decision on the *Moore vs. B.C.* education case has attracted a lot of attention in Canada's education community. Ministry officials, district leaders and those concerned with how support services to students with special education needs, have cause to reflect on current practice and consider the path forward.

For advocates of inclusive education, the consensus seems to have emerged that the *Moore* Case is not the "Silver Bullet" that will transform traditional special education in the immediate future. There are a lot of questions and possible answers are now being considered.

One thing the case does make clear is that the mandate for public education to provide the supports needed by these students has been strengthened and are not to be considered "luxuries" to be provided IF there is money to do so. Justice Abela was clear in stating

that students with special needs have a right to the full benefit of the education system just like every other child. Special education is not the goal in itself, it is the support system or as the Justice described it, "the ramp" to get them to where they need to be. Many would argue that those



outcomes can only be achieved if the extra supports or accommodations a child may need are provided in an inclusive environment. This is what research and best practice in Canada and internationally would suggest.

In this edition of *Education Watch* we feature several commentaries from stakeholders who share their views on this important development. Whether the *Moore* decision will eventually be the "Silver Bullet" to make inclusion in Canadian Schools a reality, we will only discover as we look back on what we do in the months and years ahead.

Top Court Enforces Student Rights

Roberto Lattanzio and Laurie Letheren

ARCH Disability Law Centre Legal Counsel for Intervener, Canadian Association for Community Living

The achievement of true inclusive education within our schools across Canada is predicated upon ensuring that support to each and every student is provided in a manner that is most appropriate and specific to

their individual needs and circumstances. For students with disabilities, the appropriateness of the support can be the difference maker. The Supreme Court of Canada has recently ruled that

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Toronto Conference considers implications of Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Moore vs. B.C.* case

Key opinion leaders on the topic examine the court's decision and the implications for inclusive education in Canadian Schools

A conference on Meeting the Challenge: Accommodation and Inclusion held at the Mattamy Athletic Centre at the Gardens last Wednesday turned an analytical eye toward the Moore vs. B.C. case decision.

The conference was organized by Community Living Ontario and Inclusive Education Canada.

Among the various speakers at the full-day conference were Barbara Hall, Chief Commissioner of Ontario Human Rights Commission; Diane Richler, Past-President of Inclusion International and Gordon L. Porter, Director of Inclusive Education Canada.

Event attendees included school district and school leaders, parents, teachers and agency leaders.

The 9-0 ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada in the Moore vs. B.C. case has created a new reality for district education leaders and parents of children who have a disability in Canada. The conference provided an opportunity to pause and reflect on the path ahead.

The speakers at the conference discussed what is known from research about inclusion and accommodation. Reflecting on the path ahead, they also discussed effective schooling for students with diverse needs. These issues were addressed from a legal and human rights perspective, as well as from a standpoint of education and school improvement.

Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities commits state parties to provide lifelong access to inclusive education.

Similarly, the Moore decision stated that "adequate special education . . . is not a dispensable luxury. For those with severe learning disabilities, it is the ramp that provides access to the statutory commitment to education made to all children in British Columbia."

Special education is an accommodation aimed at allowing students who have a disability equal access to education. There are currently over 300,000 students receiving special education supports in Ontario.

The main argument at the conference was that school boards must provide the opportunity for



L-R: Barbara Hall, Chief Commissioner, OHRC, Rob Lattanzio, ARCH, Diane Richler, Inclusive International, and Michael Bach, CACL.



L-R: Melanie Panitch, Ryerson University, with parent speakers, Laura LaChance, Peterborough, and Luciano Contini, Sudbury.



L-R: Laura LaChance, Conference speaker with Linda White and Kimberley Gavan, event organizers from Community Living Ontario.

inclusive, equal education to all students. Citing lack of money as an excuse is no longer acceptable.

Many parents want a system of support and accommodations in an inclusive context. Many school leaders and teachers want the same.

Some Thoughts on Achieving Inclusive Schooling

Jacqueline Specht, *Western University, London, ON*

Sheila Bennett, *Brock University, St. Catharines, ON*

Inclusive education is based on the fundamental belief that all students belong and are valued members of their classroom and neighbourhood school communities. It is both reassuring and troublesome that decades after the movement towards the inclusion of people with diverse needs into our society and therefore our public institutions, that we would still be mired in the discussion of what it means to be included, or to use a more appropriate term to 'belong'.

In the *Moore* case, the unanimous decision by the Supreme Court, that the school board failed to provide an appropriate education for one of their students shines a light on how far we have come and yet still how far we have to go. When the school board told the Moore family that Jeffrey could not be educated in the public education system once they closed their facility for students with learning disabilities they said, in essence, he does not belong, he is not one of us and because of that we cannot include him. The notion that there is somewhere else besides the public school system that is more competent and caring



Jacqueline Specht



Sheila Bennett

when it comes to the responsibility of educating students is indeed a precarious precipice on which to begin an approach to dealing with diversity.

We should ask ourselves whether we have improved in inclusive education. We believe the answer is yes, in some boards. We have been promoting the use of universal design for learning and differentiated instruction in our classrooms. We have talked about the fundamental need for humans to feel that they are valued and belong in their school community. Unfortunately, there are still school boards that insist on segregating students because of a medical diagnosis and a belief that they cannot learn in the regular classroom. This practice needs to stop.

Inclusion supports the social and academic outcomes of all students. Recent research reports that (a) there are no adverse effects or differences in the achievement of typically developing peers when students with exceptionalities are

placed in the regular classroom; (b) the inclusive classroom environment is more positive (or no different) than segregated settings for students with learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and language impairments; and (c) children with special education needs who are educated in high inclusive settings are in better health, enjoy going to school more, progress more quickly in school, and interact more positively with peers compared to those educated in low inclusive settings. Settings that promote inclusion are more successful in achieving learning for all, the ultimate goal of education.

Despite research and legislation stating that inclusive education is the preferred approach, a large percentage of students with exceptionalities continue to be excluded from the regular classroom. Even when placed in regular education classrooms, many students with special education needs do not participate fully in the academic or social life of the classroom. Significant concerns remain about the capacity for schools to effectively support the diversity of learners present in schools and the capacity for traditional special education approaches to support inclusion. Many educators lack the knowledge of instructional approaches that support inclusion (e.g., universal design for learning, differentiated instruction) and classroom management strategies. Educators are often not supported with the requisite time to



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collaborate, and there is a perceived general lack of resources for inclusive education. As a result, many students with exceptionalities still fail to reach their academic potential.

We need to equip and empower classroom teachers with the competence and confidence required to teach students with exceptionalities in inclusive classrooms in a much more systemic way. More importantly we need to employ and support leaders in education who have experience and knowledge in good inclusive practices. It almost seems as though the time for talk is past and the time for decision making is upon us. Research is clear on the fact that most teachers support inclusive practice. Even in the *Moore* case one wonders if asked, whether teachers would have said, “no I cannot educate this child”. It would seem a strange admission for any dedicated educator.

Bureaucratic hurdles, existing practice and infrastructure as well as political expedience too often seem to form the foundation for poor decision making around inclusive practice. In those boards that have shown true inclusive leadership, the educators have often embraced the opportunity to provide for the needs of all students. Teachers need to be supported and be allowed to do what they do best, and that is to teach, not just some of their students but all of them. And leadership opportunities need to be given to individuals who believe, as many do, that all children have the right to be included.

Some Thoughts on the *Moore* Decision

By Ken Pike, Director of Social Policy, NBACL



The Supreme Court’s decision in the *Moore* case found that the complainant, Jeffrey Moore (a student described as having a severe Learning Disability), was denied access to the general education available to all students as a result of the failure of his school district to provide him with the remediation accommodations he needed. The Supreme Court stated that adequate special education supports are the “ramp” that provide access to public education.

This decision is significant in that education authorities must look at the support and educational needs of students with disabilities with respect to their equal right to enjoy a publicly funded education. While the case centred on Jeffrey’s need for “intensive remediation” as a result of his Learning Disability, it has broader implications. The Court noted that the finding of discrimination “has broader remedial repercussions for how other students with severe learning disabilities are educated.”

I believe that the decision also impacts students with a variety of disabilities and their individual needs for support. Ministries of education and school districts must give serious consideration to their human rights obligations to provide adequate support so that all students can have access to education services. This means that adequate funding will be required to meet these obligations. While the court noted that financial constraints are a relevant consideration when determining the scope of the obligation, accommodations for students with disabilities was not a question of “mere efficiency”.

The impact of the *Moore* decision on advancing the inclusion of students with disabilities is a bit less clear. The ‘ramp’ comparison noted above supports the notion that educational supports should provide access to the general education system. If Ministries of Education and districts do take their human rights obligations seriously, then supports for students to participate in regular education must be made available. Methods and strategies to provide the kind of support required by Jeffrey Moore within the context of inclusion must also be addressed.

The Court did not specifically address the question of inclusion but did note that the avoidance of similar claims of discrimination will require the provision of a range of services for students with disabilities in accordance with education legislation and its related policies. The advancement of inclusion will still require clear mandates within legislation and government policy. Additionally, right to an inclusive education contained in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* must also be considered. The *Moore* decision can be seen as an important contribution to the promotion of these rights.

The *Moore* Decision: The “ramp” to an inclusive education

A Commentary by Bruce Uditsky

Bruce Uditsky is the CEO of the Alberta Association for Community Living

The Supreme Court’s unanimous decision in *Moore vs. British Columbia (Education)* 2012 has garnered much attention in terms of its implications for inclusive education. Currently government lawyers across the country are reviewing the decision and advising their departments of education as to what they perceive will be the implications. And of course their opinions are likely to vary from those in the legal profession who support the right of students with intellectual disabilities to a quality inclusive education.

I am not a lawyer so I will attempt to restrict my observations to those of an advocate. I will consider only some aspects of the decision. I have been engaged in legal actions over the years and I know that one’s personal sense of justice and truth do not always align with judicial processes and decisions. My analysis of how advocates may take advantage of the *Moore* decision will need to be judged in time as more is learned from the analysis of legal experts and the future actions of governments and parents seeking an inclusive education.

Before examining *Moore*, I want to say that I have some hope that this decision may contribute to the

beginning of the unraveling of the Supreme Court decision in *Emily Eaton vs. the Brant County Board of Education* (1997). In *Eaton*, the Supreme Court denied Emily Eaton a right to inclusive education. Even worse, the decision had the effect of relegating individuals with intellectual disabilities to second-class status.

The Court effectively suggested that parents who demand inclusion were potentially acting with bias and not in the best interests of their child. The Court decided that the *objective* opinions of educational experts should trump the authority of parents even if that resulted in the forced segregated placement of a child with special needs.

The court did not distinguish between special education supports, and segregated special education. The Court seemed to have no understanding that special education could be delivered in a regular inclusive classroom.

Most telling, the Court in *Eaton* found the quality of an intellectual disability could be taken into account in determining whether discrimination had occurred. That is, given the severity of a person’s cognitive impairment it might not be prejudicial to deny that person the rights accorded to others. This is akin to stating that the depth of



colour of someone’s skin, how overt their sexual orientation or noticeable their ethnicity can be taken into account when determining whether discrimination is justified – an abhorrent notion to almost all Canadians. It is interesting to remember that while the Court could not envision a child with significant cognitive challenges being included in an elementary classroom, there were many children with comparable disabilities being included all over Canada.

The one positive note in the *Eaton* Case was that the Court stated integration should be the norm but in the context of the totality of the decision, this sentiment carried little weight with governments and educational systems.

The *Moore* case may give more hope, even with its limitations. However, governments and school systems are paying attention to *Moore* because of its financial implications and not its inclusive education implications. *Moore* makes no reference to inclusive education so it will be up to advocates, parents and their legal



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allies to find the avenues that support inclusion.

In *Moore* it seems the Court did not equate special education exclusively with placement, although this is not certain. The most hopeful indicator was the Court's critical decision that special education was the means to enable a child with disabilities to access education, not an end unto itself – the court used the analogy of a “ramp” in providing access to general education. Whether the Court means this to apply to all children with disabilities remains unclear as in some instances the Court references children with disabilities in general and other times references students with learning disabilities specifically. The Court also found that a school system was required to adequately fund needed special education, must take into account the impact of its funding decisions on the needs of children with disabilities and must provide an appropriate education relative to their needs.

However, in *Moore*, there was little dispute between the school district's experts and Jeffrey's parents as to what he required – a special education delivered outside the regular classroom. It is not at all clear how the Court would have deliberated if there was a dispute between what Jeffrey's parents wanted and the school districts' experts supported. This is a constant debate in inclusive education

where school districts too often argue, in opposition to a parent's view of the need for an inclusive education that a student with intellectual disabilities belongs in a segregated environment.

On the basis of *Moore* one avenue for advocates to consider is to situate inclusive education within special education. My preference has always been to define inclusive education as a means and ends that lies outside of special education, given the historical systemic devaluation of special education and its allegiance to segregation and all its trappings. Many of us have wanted inclusive education to be the domain and concern of regular and general educators. While still holding firmly to that concept, *Moore* may suggest a complementary consideration.

If an inclusive education can be shown as the ‘special education ramp’ to education in general for a student with special needs then *Moore* implies not only must that student be entitled to this education but also it must be funded and appropriately provided. This approach situates inclusive education directly into the Court's analysis in *Moore*. The right to inclusive education still remains elusive. However since a right to an appropriate special education, as a means to access education in general is affirmed in *Moore*, then logic might dictate following a similar argument in acquiring an inclusive education.

The critical point in this

proposed approach to *Moore* rests on schools/school districts agreeing with parents that an inclusive education is the appropriate ‘special education ramp’ for a child with special needs.

The challenge then remains to secure that agreement on the rightfulness of an inclusive education for an individual student. Today there is an abundance of knowledge and research from over 40 years of practice on how inclusive education is an effective means of accessing regular education and achieving meaningful post-school outcomes. Quality inclusive education works when students with intellectual disabilities access the regular curriculum in a regular classroom with instructional and curricular adaptations as needed. This seems consistent with the Court's reasoning in *Moore*.

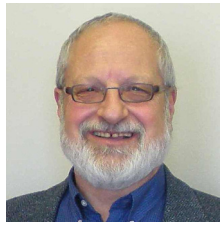
It is already the practice in Alberta (and hopefully other provinces), that adequate funding be provided when a school agrees to provide an inclusive education. This is a matter of law, although not all Alberta educators and parents are aware of this.

As parents and advocates, our challenge now is to demonstrate that an inclusive education is the necessary ‘special education ramp’ for a child with intellectual disabilities. We need to ensure that this ‘inclusive ramp’ becomes a right. The *Moore* decision may help us do it.

What is Ontario's provincial Education Committee up to these days?

Salvatore (Sal) Amenta, PhD, Education Committee Co-Chair, with H  l  ne Morin-Chain

Community Living Ontario is committed to promoting the social inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Its education committee advocates for the



Salvatore Amenta

inclusion of students with special needs in regular schools and classes rather than segregated classes and schools. These students must be taught by regular classroom teachers, like everyone else, not just by specialists. Classrooms should be as diverse and accommodating as possible so that, after school, all graduates will get along with each other in society at large.

Our vision fits perfectly with the current thrust for diversity and inclusion, not to mention the philosophical tenets of "Learning for All K-12"*, with its emphasis on *differentiated instruction* and *universal design*. These may not yet be official policy in Ontario, but they have become integral parts of its educational vocabulary.

While solidly grounded on the UN Declaration on the Rights of the

Child (and of individuals with disabilities), the Canadian Charter and Ontario's Human Rights Code, inclusive education is still far from the norm. Despite improvements, our schools and

classrooms are not yet fully inclusive, as documented by a 2012 study.**

In an effort to fulfill its mandate, the education committee has established working relations with the Ministry of Education and the College of Teachers... but not yet with the teachers themselves! Since only classroom teachers can make inclusive education a reality, as its co-chair I steered the committee in this direction by arranging a meeting with Ontario Teachers' Federation last month. And after hearing from us its general secretary reported our meeting to the OTF executive. Following that we were informed that the affiliates wanted us to contact them directly, and we have done so.

In early spring, we will meet with the four affiliates (elementary,

secondary, catholic and French) to explore ways in which to affirm and promote our cause directly to teachers, not just to their leaders and administrators (as important as they are). For example, as part of the Community Inclusion Initiative, "Re:Action4Inclusion" has encouraged students to raise the consciousness of their peers. With support from the federations, something similar might be done for teachers in the schools. We would also propose that Community Living advocates be invited to participate in federation activities, like workshops, courses, PD Days, conferences and AGMs – where we could deliver our message directly to classroom teachers.

We believe that by winning teachers over to our cause as a social justice issue, they will be more receptive to it than they would if required to adopt this new approach.

* Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009.

**Sheila Bennett and Tiffany Gallagher, *Delivery of Educational Services*, 2012



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Can Inclusive Education Work in Our City? – A Father’s Vision for Change

Sudbury, Ontario dad, Luciano Contini has a vision. He has two sons and wants them both to benefit from quality education in their neighbourhood school. Luciano and his wife Julie want both boys included in classes with their peers, and everything they have learned since their youngest son was born with Down syndrome makes them think it is not only possible, but necessary. But not everyone has the same vision. Luciano Contini shares his story with us.



Luciano Contini and wife Julie, with John (front) and Peter (Back)

“All these doctors are going to tell you is what that boy can’t do. Don’t believe them. You are going to be fighting for that child for the rest of your lives.”

I recall my wife and I both falling silent as a health care professional shared this with us. I believe that the reason we fell silent is that we began to absorb how our job as parents would be different from how we raised our first-born. We began to prepare for the reality that this job would expand beyond the walls of our home, in a way that we could not immediately predict.

It’s four years later and some things are becoming very apparent. For me, there is a distinction between differences you can “see” in people and those that you can not. This is not to say that

challenges that are readily visible are more difficult to manage than those that are less apparent to the eye, but that application of stereotypes and discrimination can occur much sooner when differences in people are clearly “visible”. Closely associated to this personal experience is that when some people “see” a difference in someone, they react according to what they have been taught and/or they have questions. Questioning is so much more obvious in childhood, when we are the most impressionable and so full of those questions.

If I am even slightly accurate in what I say above, I would like to ask how we think children assess the world we live in; specifically, a world in which other children, who may look and/or act differently

than themselves, are kept apart from them as they do things that children typically do, like go to school, play sports or play at a park. Let me share a personal experience with you.

My son with Down syndrome attends a Montessori school, which is focused on inclusion and that uses an integrative approach as a means of bringing the child back into an inclusive classroom. At Montessori, my son is “Peter” and I am proud to say that I am referred-to as “Peter’s daddy”. He is not “the kid with Down syndrome” and I do not receive uncomfortable looks when I am with him. Peter is with his friends when he eats, plays, sleeps and perhaps most importantly, when he learns. I would presume that if Peter is then placed in a separate classroom

with other challenged children, many of his friends would ask why he is being separated from them. Contrast this with when Peter is surrounded by children with whom he does not attend school. When we take our son to the soccer field to watch his older brother play, for some children he suddenly becomes the kid with “funny eyes” or “ugly”. Are these children at fault? Unequivocally not – they have not been exposed to children who “look different”. And there are spin-off effects ... in an instant, his brother becomes an advocate, telling his friends that his brother is “not ugly” and that he is “cute, because he’s my brother”.

Luckily, the lesson taught to the children by their parents in this

personal example was that judgemental conclusions are not appropriate, that we must be kind and that Peter is a little boy like them, only unique, as we all are in our own ways. As for my eldest, I am told that he is “doing what a big brother does” – defending his “kid brother”. He loves his brother deeply, and through Peter he is blessed with the gift of seeing beyond differences from a very early age.

Children are impressionable. Separate the children at an early age, and the “normal” child begins to draw conclusions, becoming more likely to not be accepting of including the “different” children in his or her daily activities. Keep the children together, and the “normal”

child is more likely to question why we would ever consider separating him or her from their friends. As adults, we are accountable for the outcomes manifested in the children who are affected by our decisions and actions. What we do as adults affects them positively or adversely, many times without us being aware of our power to influence.

Inclusive education is critical to acceptance not only in school, but to start the process of positive societal impact. We send our children into the care of our school systems as early as the age of four. Schools must acknowledge the considerable evidence that the achievement of children with

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Julie Contini shares – “8 Truths About Special Needs Parenting”

Julie Contini shared her story as a mother in the *Canadian Living* magazine in October 2012. Her article is titled: “8 Truths About Special Needs Parenting”. Julie is the vice-president of the Down Syndrome Association of Sudbury. Julie and her husband Luciano are facing challenges many parents encounter in towns and cities across Canada.

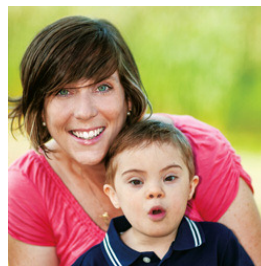
An excerpt from Julie’s story:

I know that not everyone appreciates a child with special needs.

If you're one of those people, please don't give me the look

that tells me you are uncomfortable with children who have special needs, or stare and walk away when my son is attempting to interact with your child. This is hurtful.

I somehow feel obligated to tell people who may not already know that my son has Down syndrome. It's as if I'm giving them the right to say, "Oh well, then he can't be involved," or "Really? That's too bad." I shouldn't have to explain my son's diagnosis in order for him to be



Julie with son Peter

accepted.

My son is lucky to be enrolled in the local Montessori school, where he's included, sometimes with a little extra help, in all classroom activities and

outdoor excursions. We joked recently that his third birthday party involved 20 of his closest friends! The school is wonderful, accommodating and respectful, as are the parents. We are grateful.

Read the full article on-line:

http://www.canadianliving.com/moms/family_life/8_truths_about_special_needs_parenting.php



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Made in Manitoba Alliance – MAUDL – works to Support Diversity in our Classrooms

Winnipeg, Manitoba – February 2013

The Manitoba Alliance for Universal Design in Learning (MAUDL) is a group of passionate, dedicated individuals who have formed an alliance to promote Universal Design for Learning and the “Respecting Diversity Curriculum” in Manitoba classrooms. This group is led by Dr. Jennifer Katz, a highly skilled and charismatic professor in the Department of Education at the University of Manitoba. At any given meeting of this alliance you can find representatives of three Manitoba provincial universities (Brandon University, University of Manitoba and University of Winnipeg), the Manitoba Teachers' Society, Manitoba Education, the Council of School Leaders, Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, community groups, and many school divisions working together to expand their own knowledge and practice. MAUDL provides an unparalleled opportunity to directly connect researchers and practitioners, and research and practice in the education system. Ultimately the goal is to “Build Inclusive, Compassionate Learning Communities” for all students.

There is widespread agreement with the principles of inclusive education and of universal design, but it is often the practical application of these principles that are difficult to address. Dr. Katz's



Jennifer Katz

Three Block Model of Universal Design for Learning looks at systems and structures, instructional practice and social and emotional learning as the foundation for effective teaching and

learning in today's classrooms. It provides teachers with practical ways of creating inclusive environments and improving student engagement. Dr. Katz explains, “Inclusion means that every child is a part of the social and academic life of the classroom regardless of gender, culture, language, ability/disability, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status. Students coming to school should all have the chance to feel good about themselves and what they contribute to the community, the opportunity to experience success and growth, and feel a sense of belonging and interconnectedness to something larger than themselves. The UDL model offers teachers a way to include students and to ensure that students have the opportunity to realize their gifts.”

Through an interactive and informative website, <http://www.threeblockmodel.com>, Dr. Katz has provided and will continue to add to hands-on lessons for teachers to use in their classrooms allowing them to incorporate a respect for diversity into everything that they and their

students do. This respect recognizes the gifts and talents that everyone brings into the classroom and capitalizes upon them for the good of all.

A number of Manitoba schools and school divisions are using the UDL model to put inclusive education into action. Mr. Charles Bendu, a Special Education Resource Teacher with Dufferin School (Winnipeg), has begun to implement the Three Block UDL model in his classrooms and witnessed an increase in student engagement. “Once the room is set up and the students understand what their strengths are, the students can begin to demonstrate their learning from that point of view. What makes the UDL model so effective is that it helps teachers guide students to demonstrate their learning and to be engaged. It's a very democratic and flexible way of instructing students at different levels.”

As part of their celebration of Inclusive Education Week, February 18 to 22, 2013, Community Living Manitoba is pleased profile the work of MAUDL and the many other wonderful initiatives taking place in our province.

Community Living Manitoba is dedicated to the inclusion of people of all ages who live with an intellectual disability.

– Anne Kresta



Supporting Inclusion – One Child at a Time: My work as an Education Consultant

Aqeela Khalid

Aqeela is a teacher and is employed as an inclusive education consultant for the Alberta Association for Community Living (AACL). We asked her some questions about her work and what it means for families.

1. What do you do at AACL?

At AACL, I am one of two Inclusive Education Consultants. My work involves individual coaching to families on how to understand inclusive teaching and school processes as well as facilitation and support for families at school meetings. I also provide individual classroom support and consultation to teachers and schools. I help them with planning modifications and adaptations to curriculum, strategies for including students with intellectual/developmental disabilities in the regular classroom. Occasionally I provide professional development workshops for schools and school districts.

2. What issues do parents seek support with?

Parents are the “experts” on their child’s needs. However most

meetings with schools go better when we keep the agenda to a few key matters. The parents I support often come with a general “big picture” idea of what they would like for their child’s inclusion. I might help identify parent’s main priorities before a transition meeting. We talk about what questions they might ask and consider what it is reasonable and appropriate to expect from the teacher, educational assistant, or school administration. Parents often welcome coaching in preparation for school meetings.

I assist parents in sharing their child’s gifts and strengths and work to bridge the gap that might exist with teachers. I also provide assistance with specific curricular adaptations and modifications that allow for increased participation for the child with disabilities in the regular classroom.

3. What obstacle do you encounter most frequently that keeps a child from being included in the community school?

Schools do not necessarily see the child with a disability as a learner and assume the only way a

child can be included is with special programming and resources. This often ends up to mean the child must have an educational assistant. There may also be a mindset that children with disabilities need to learn something distinct from their typical peers or that the child’s needs would be best met by being in a special program or with those who have ‘more’ resources and expertise. Schools may not see the potential for the child to learn and grow within the community school. Moving beyond “what has been done” is critical for helping schools include children with disabilities. Schools need to be creative about “what can be done” and consider all the possibilities.

4. Are the obstacles connected to funding or to "the way the school does things"?

My experience is that obstacles, for the most part, are connected to the way the school does things. The Ministry of Education funds school districts in the same manner across the province, and yet we have fully inclusive school districts, fully inclusive schools, partially inclusive

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Manitoba Minister of Education Proclaims Inclusive Education Week

Community Living Manitoba was pleased that Hon. Nancy Allan, Minister of Education proclaimed February 18 to 22, 2013 as Inclusive Education Week in Manitoba. CLM congratulates Manitoba's teachers, administrators and schools on their progress towards the inclusion of all students, regardless of the diversity that they bring with them.

From the story of how the inclusion of Shane in McGregor school had a life long impact on his friend, Trem, to how one of our school divisions is piloting a process that examines the inclusive culture within the school community, we can see progress. The good news continues with the work of the Manitoba Alliance for Universal Design for Learning. We are also happy to recognize the work of the Social Justice Club of Gimli High School. They developed a student-led presentation to accompany a video project entitled "My Special Need". It presents the experience of disability as an interwoven thread in the fabric of the life of the school.

Through these stories and many others, we can see that together we are building a society that values and supports the inclusion of people of all ages with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our strength is truly in our ability to embrace our differences – Diversity includes!



Hon. Nancy Allan, Manitoba Minister of Education

Gimli High School: Students Develop Video Profiling the Benefits of Inclusive Education

Winnipeg, February 2013

In 2010, a group of nine students from the GHS Social Justice Club created a documentary focused on inclusion of students with disabilities. "Our Special Need," produced with the help of Winnipeg filmmaker Randy Guest, intends to elicit reactions from the viewer using point / counterpoint discussion of topics such as 'defining disability', 'whether or not students with special needs are pampered', 'whether or not there is a need for segregation', and 'whether the students with special needs are appropriately prepared

for life after school'. The common thread of these issues, 'dreams' is presented as something we collectively pursue, and plays prominently throughout the film.

The core group involved in the filming, design, story-boarding, and the editing process has now graduated. The fruit of their labour has been picked up by a new group of keen, inspired students who have created a presentation on inclusion based on the documentary. This current group will challenge students and staff in sister high and middle schools, to question myths surrounding

disabilities, to embrace empathy rather than sympathy, and to emphasize commonalities over differences. Optimistically, the result will be schools where all students have a chance to express their talents, and where each student will have an opportunity to make their dreams a reality, finding a sense of belonging.

"Our Special Need" and "In the Locker," a previous student video project targeting homophobia, are available from Gimli High School's Social Justice Club.

As part of their celebration of Inclusive Education Week, February 18 to 22, 2013, Community Living Manitoba was pleased to profile the work of Gimli High School's Social Justice Club.

– Anne Kresta

Minister Carr's Mandate: Improvement and Inclusion

Hon. Jody Carr, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development has emphasized the need for New Brunswick schools to improve student learning and do so in an inclusive context. “We need to increase student success in learning in our province”, Carr said, “and we need to build on the 25 year effort to make our schools inclusive so every child benefits from our efforts”.

The Department of EECD has called on the expertise of Michael Fullan, the retired Dean of Education at the University of Toronto to suggest strategies to make change happen for school improvement. New Brunswick experts, Gordon Porter and Angèle AuCoin have provided the stimulus for connecting school improvement to inclusive practices. Fullan, Porter and AuCoin have been part of leadership training with educational leaders in the province in June 2011 and again in June 2012.



Michael Fullan, Gordon Porter, Angèle AuCoin and Hon. Jody Carr at workshop in Fredericton.

“I am very pleased that senior officials in the Ministry and in our seven school districts are able to work with these three experts”, Carr stated. “I look forward to the positive differences we can make for our teachers and students.”

A Father's Vision

Continued from page 7

challenges is significantly improved in inclusive classrooms. Further, an “inclusive classroom” is not the same as an “inclusive school environment”, where special needs children can be directed to segregated classrooms without proper consideration of reasonable accommodation. The research supports the former, and not the latter. I believe the social and societal benefits of inclusive classrooms to be immeasurable.

By now many have learned of the *Moore v. British Columbia (Education)* case. One of the significant conclusions of this case for me is that quality public education is not intended to be considered separately from “special education”. The court concluded that these supports should be treated as a ramp to equitable outcomes that every

child should receive from public education. Inclusion has supposedly been guaranteed via legislation, but in the practical world, school boards’ definitions of “undue hardship” in accommodating special needs students have seemed to trump the expectations of various education acts and human rights codes. Those definitions were tested in the *Moore* case and the Supreme Court of Canada supported the family. Parents can now have some measure of increased confidence when expecting proper accommodation of their special needs child in the regular classroom.

We know that parents’ expectations will not always be met. As school boards are counselled on the *Moore* case by their lawyers, some of them will undoubtedly rely

on different interpretations of the case and leverage their considerable influence and financial resources to take a position that is contrary to our own.

As parents and advocates, what do we do? To assure the full impact of the *Moore* case, we need to affirm our children’s entitlements in our schools. If we choose not to, we diminish, and even run the risk of losing the benefits that can potentially emerge from this victory for quality education and human rights. Through intense and collaborative effort we can help our own children and the children of others. We can help advance the lives of all of our children. My wife Julie and I intend to participate in this effort. We are confident we will be joined by many others.



**Diversity includes.
On se ressemble.**



From left: Sophie Pitre-Boudreau, Angèle AuCoin, Gordon L. Porter and Deirdre Smith

Team Starts French Language Case Study Project

A project to produce a series of case studies focused on inclusive education issues and practice got under way in Moncton, New Brunswick in March.

The project is the first of it's kind to be done in the French language. The participants were teachers, principals, resource teachers and parents affiliated with the Francophone school system in

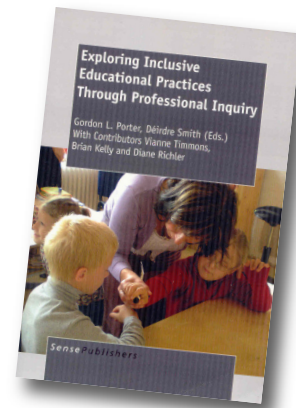
New Brunswick.

“Teachers are excited about this project”, said Angèle AuCoin, the team leaders. “We will get real stories about real challenges in the Francophone schools and people can learn and discuss issues that are connected to their own reality”.

Deirdre Smith from the Ontario College of Teachers and Gordon Porter of Inclusive Education

Canada provided guidance on the case study methodology. They recently edited an English language book using case studies called *Exploring Inclusive Educational Practices Through Professional Inquiry*, published by SENSE Publishing in 2011.

“We are pleased teachers find value in the case study approach to learning about inclusive practices”, said Smith. The project was organized by Sophie Pitre-Boudreau who is working on the inclusive education action strategy of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in New Brunswick.



Francophone Professor and Researcher Receives Inclusion Award – Raymond Vienneau



Raymond Vienneau

The New Brunswick Association for Community Living presented an Inclusive Education Award to Raymond Vienneau a Professor of Education at the l'Université de Moncton. The presentation was made in Fredericton by Lt. Governor Nicholas and Hon. Jody Carr, Minister of Education. Dr. Vienneau has been a teacher, a resource teacher and a specialist at the Department of Education in New Brunswick. Since 1985 Raymond has been a faculty member at New

Brunswick's only Francophone University. He has trained teachers at the undergraduate and graduate levels in the knowledge and skills required for inclusive education. Raymond is one of Canada's leading Francophone researchers and teachers in this field. Professor Vienneau has established collaborative relationships focused on inclusive education with professional colleagues in Spain and Switzerland.

Inclusive Education Awards on PEI

Queen Charlotte Peer Buddies Receive Inclusive Education Award in PEI

The Prince Edward Island Association for Community Living presented an award to the Peer Buddies group at Queen Charlotte Intermediate School in Charlottetown on February 25th, during National Inclusive Education Month in Canada. Minister of Education, Hon. Alan MacIsaac was on hand for the presentation and added his best wishes to the group. They were recognized for supporting inclusion at its best, and for their efforts to make sure everyone belongs and that each student can contribute to the life of their school.

The Peer Buddies group was nominated by Principal Parker Grimmer who wrote:

“The Peer Helper group, Karen, Gladys, Lori and Cathy are worthy of their work with inclusive education because their efforts to create, inspire, promote, implement, support and advocate for unique opportunities that have resulted in enriching the lives of our Queen Charlotte students, including our students with



This is a group shot of all the Peer helpers, buddies, four staff: Gladys Kickham, Karen Carmichael, Lori Johnston, Cathy Taylor-Bridges, who received the award, and in the back of the group you can see Mr. Parker Grimmer, Principal and Minister of Education, Mr. Alan MacIsaac.

disabilities. They truly inspire a world where everyone belongs.”

PEI ACL recognizes the group as future leaders in the community who will ensure social inclusion for all. CBC radio followed up with an interview on Island Morning on Monday, March 11th.

Here is the link to the interview.
<http://www.cbc.ca/player/Audio>

Mobile/Island%2BMorning/ID/2342043061/

On Monday, February 25th, members of PEIACL travelled to Queen Charlotte Intermediate to present the award to the four staff, and 17 Peer Helpers. It was a pleasure to meet the group and an honour to be able to give them the national award.

Francophone teachers in New Brunswick work on inclusion strategies

Discussions on building and strengthening inclusion in schools is on-going in New Brunswick schools. Angela AuCoin, Professor at the University of Moncton and Francophone Inclusion Project Chair, recently held discussions with several teachers in Moncton. Pictured are: Manon Boucher, École MFB – Shédiac, Francophone sud; Martine Paquet, Polyvalente AJ Savoie – St-Quentin, Francophone nord-ouest; Professor AuCoin; and Serge Sonier, École La villa des Amis – Tracadie, Francophone nord-est.



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The Cutest Face

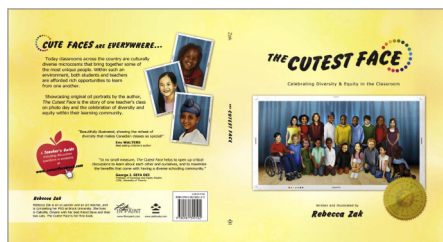


Rebecca Zak is an award-winning author of *The Cutest Face: Celebrating Diversity & Equity in the Classroom*.



Rebecca is a Peel Elementary Teacher and a PhD in Education candidate who's written and illustrated a research-based children's book/teachers' resource focusing on inclusion.

The book is entitled, *The Cutest Face: Celebrating Diversity & Equity in the Classroom*. Her objective was to create a classroom resource that mirrors the broad diversity of people living in Canada. Rebecca says "I was inspired by my own multicultural, multi-abled students to produce a story that any child – no matter their background – could



pick up and recognize him or herself in."

The story takes place on picture day at school; the teacher narrator talks about how each child is unique and special, while diversity is conveyed implicitly through the hand-painted oil portrait illustrations. The child characters

have been rendered highly realistically in order to make them look like real people readers may meet in their neighbourhood or school. Ultimately the message is of inclusion.

This hardcover book comes with a free downloadable teachers' guide with discussion questions and activities, and is available in English and French. It was also honoured by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario as a recent winner of their Arts and Culture Award.

For more information, please see www.cutestfacebook.com

Some video links:

Toronto Word On The Street Festival: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vCufqL9Q_M

Book Signing at Chapters: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7vKgfBMXzU>

School Author Talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1qtxwIwqBY>

Top Court Enforces Student Rights *(Continued from front page)*

school boards must take heed and ensure that their decision-making considers the individual needs of the student when assessing the supports and services available to that student.

The *Moore v. British Columbia (Education)* decision represents a high water mark for disability-accommodation rights. Although inclusive education was not a central issue before the Court, the decision nonetheless is significant and provides sufficient guidance to support stronger efforts to achieve inclusive education.

One of the central issues of this

case was the meaning of "services" for students with disabilities in the education context. The lower court had determined that for students who access supports through special education services, the services in question were "special education" services rather than general education services. The Court rejected this determination stating, "Comparing Jeffrey only with other special needs students would mean that the District could cut *all* special needs programs and yet be immune from a claim of discrimination." The Court accepted that the rubric of "special

education" is not in and of itself an education service to students with disabilities but rather forms part of the accommodations that facilitate the participation to educational services which all children are entitled to.

This decision places a clear onus on schools to fully understand and adhere to their obligations pursuant to provincial and territorial human rights statutes. Human rights laws protect students from being short changed by "mere efficiency" and ensure that they are supported in a "meaningful" way. Anything less will be discriminatory.

Trem & Lynda: Our Story.. the Flip Side of the Coin

For years now, inclusion in our schools has been having a great impact on children with all types of disabilities to live more typical, relationship based lives in their community schools. Although the work is far from over, advances have been and continue to be made. Children with disabilities are becoming part of regular schools and cultures, and are finally taking their rightful place in our communities across the country.

Trem Cleaver and Lynda Dobbin-Turner have decided that the time has come to celebrate the flip side of that, in sharing the impact that Lynda's son Shane had on Trem, both in his formative years, and now as an adult.



Trem and Shane.

Trem and Shane became best friends from the time they met at the age of four in nursery school. That friendship grew and developed throughout their elementary years, and on into high school.

Shane lived life with Cerebral Palsy using a wheelchair for mobility, eye gaze for communication and receiving his nutritional support through a



Lynda and Trem.

feeding tube. Trem lived his life on the sports fields as a star soccer and hockey player, eventually becoming president of the school council. In theory, the two boys couldn't have been more different. But in reality, they could not have been closer. "People often ask me what I got out of being Shane's friend" Trem says. "A better question might be what didn't I get! We had sleepovers, we travelled together, we communicated in our own way. I could always just be myself around him, and that was who he loved being with."

"It's one thing for a mother to go up in front of an audience and tell them all that her child who had a disability gained from the friendships and people that came into his life, but there is a different impact when a young man like Trem can share what that same child

gave back to him" says Lynda. "I think that is the message that other young people need to hear, so that they don't limit their own opportunity to have someone incredible come into their life and become friends."

Since Shane's sudden passing in Grade 11 (2009), Lynda and Trem have supported each other through the grief and transition of life after Shane. Both are passionate about making sure that the lessons he taught and the love that he shared is not forgotten. The presentation they have done together shares both views, including the background work Lynda was doing to facilitate their friendship and songs that she has written to celebrate Shane and share the journey. But one of the most important points through all that was going on was Trem's statement that "*He's just my friend.*" What bigger compliment is there!

– Anne Kresta



Trem, Shane and Lynda.



Diversity includes.
On se ressemble.

Bogota School Builds Capacity for Inclusion Through a School Support Team

In 2011, the principal and psychologist of the Colegio Nuevo Gimnasio in Bogotá, Colombia visited New Brunswick schools to study inclusive practices. They had been working on becoming an effective inclusive school for several years and were anxious to see what they could learn from their Canadian colleagues.

They found many practices of interest and have reported using them in the last few years in their improvement efforts. However they identified the concept of the school-based support team” as the single most important strategy they picked up in New Brunswick. Here is what Luz Stella Uricoechea, Director of the school, and Ligia Torres, the school psychologist, shared with us about this:

“The creation of a school support team: in Colombia there was a common belief among teachers that they had to be Special Educators in order to work with students with disabilities. But the creation of the teacher support team showed regular teachers that they are capable of generating strategies that not only



Luz Stella Uricoechea, Director (Right) and Ligia Torres, Psychologist (Second from Right) with three of the school's resource teachers.

benefit special needs students, but benefit everybody in their classes. When a regular teacher develops strategies for students with disabilities, he/she becomes a better teacher. Also this team-work eliminates the idea that students with disabilities must go outside the regular classes to have support. Support is for the classroom teacher not for the special student.”

Director of Inclusive Education Canada Collaborates with Leaders at Alberta Education

Joyce Clayton, Director of the Inclusive Learning Supports Branch at Alberta Education welcomed Dr. Gordon L. Porter, the Director of Inclusive Education Canada to discuss issues and strategies with more than 30 senior staff at Alberta Education in November 2012. Porter and Clayton were panelists at a conference on Human Rights and Inclusion organized by the Atlantic Human Rights Centre at St. Thomas University in Fredericton in June 2012. Porter is working as a senior advisor to the Education and Early Childhood Development Ministry in New Brunswick on actions to implement the “Strengthening Inclusion, Strengthening Schools” report released in June 2012 by Minister Hon. Jody Carr.

In the fall of 2010, inclusion was identified as part



Joyce Clayton of Alberta Education and Gordon L. Porter of Inclusive Education Canada

of government’s Inspiring Action on Education initiative, and Setting the Direction was renamed Action on Inclusion to signal implementation of an inclusive education system.

Several initiatives of Alberta Education support the development of inclusion in Alberta Schools. One is the online Inclusive Education Planning Tool (IEPT) designed to support teachers to create learner profiles and inform classroom planning.

A second is to use “Learning Coaches” as “potential supports for inclusion”. This strategy has been used in a number of schools and Alberta Education has put out a literature review, a discussion paper and a proposed learning coach role description. They are available on the Action on Inclusion website.

Link: <http://www.education.alberta.ca/department/ipr/inclusion.aspx>

One Child at a Time *(Continued from front page 11)*

districts, and schools and districts with congregated special education classrooms.

In fact, within the same district we have schools that are fully inclusive and schools that stream students to special education classrooms. Despite equal amounts of provincial funding, some districts claim they do not have enough resources to include students, while others creatively and successfully include all students. It seems the funding is not the big challenge. Leadership and commitment to inclusion are the keys.

5. What is the school response when the parent has an "advocate" to assist them?

My role at AACL is to be a consultant not an advocate. This is to preserve the collaborative relationship that I develop with educators in the schools. An advocate may focus on "if" there will be inclusion for a child in a school. My job is on "how" it can be done. Schools may not be receptive at first and may feel we don't trust them. However over time, I show I am there to be a support. Advocacy may be needed but it is not my role.

6. Can you share a particularly positive "case" you have been involved in? What leads to positive work?

The positive cases happen in those schools where we are able to establish a collaborative relationship. There is no recipe that will guarantee perfect inclusion.

However, when we work together we can usually be creative and find ways to support the teacher and the student.

Recently In one school, I was able to sit "at the elbow" with the school and write "I can" statements with teachers as we brainstormed lesson plan ideas. The relationship was strong and the school requested that I provide professional development for teachers and educational assistants. The consultation was valuable for the family, the school, and the district.

7. What else helps you be successful?

I always feel most successful when I can empower the family to take the lead. Families know their child and can help teachers find ways for their child to be included in school.

I work with families to identify the key learning outcomes that would be a good fit for the child. I later bring those key learning's to the school to help teachers modify and adapt their instruction to best teach those key outcomes. I also help teachers maximize the child's participation in all aspects of the typical school experience.

8. Is there something that makes you optimistic about the future of inclusion in Alberta schools?

Families are leading the way for greater inclusion in Alberta. Families are getting together and sharing their challenges and

success. Teachers are more aware that inclusion is an expectation and they are willing to figure out how to include more students successfully in their classrooms.

Inclusive post-secondary education programs at universities and colleges in Alberta have also created the expectation that inclusion is about more than public school – it is about the community as a whole. Technology is another source of optimism. It is easier to differentiate lessons for the different learning needs of all students when the technology needed is relatively inexpensive and available.

Although the understanding and definition of inclusion remains far too ambiguous and open to interpretation, Alberta Education has committed to inclusion and is working towards implementing an inclusive education system. That's a reason to be optimistic and we are working to make sure that happens – one child at a time – if need be.



**Diversity includes.
On se ressemble.**

Summer Symposium to be held in London, Ontario July 14-17, 2013

MEETING THE DIVERSITY CHALLENGE: Critical Concepts for School District and School Leaders in the post-Moore vs. B.C. World

This three-day symposium will address these issues from a legal and human rights focus, as well as from an educational and school improvement perspective. Sessions will explore the challenges and opportunities that face every school and district in Canada. Customized sessions will provide opportunities for individual participants to work as teams to explore and address challenges in their working environment. Participants can interact with our symposium team and each other to develop strategies for moving forward.

This symposium will be of interest to School Leaders, District Leaders, and Education Advocates. We encourage the participation of teams. The symposium will make it possible for you to work on strategies and action plans for your school or board in "meeting the accommodation and inclusion challenge". Plan to bring a team from your school, district or organization.

Space will be limited, so watch for registration information and get your team organized early.

Registration information and program detail will be posted on the following websites:



Inclusive Education Canada
www.inclusiveeducation.ca



Community Living Ontario
www.communitylivingontario.ca

BC Summer Institute

Date: July 15th - 19th, 2013

Location: University of British Columbia

The 2013 Summer Institute is led by the Family Support Institute in Vancouver. This event is designed to provide a robust learning environment that will facilitate strategic approaches to inclusion and belonging for all students of BC's elementary and secondary schools.

For more information or advanced registration, please contact Angela Clancy, email aclancy@fsibc.com
<http://bcacl.org/sites/default/files/Creating-Future-postcard%202013.pdf>



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